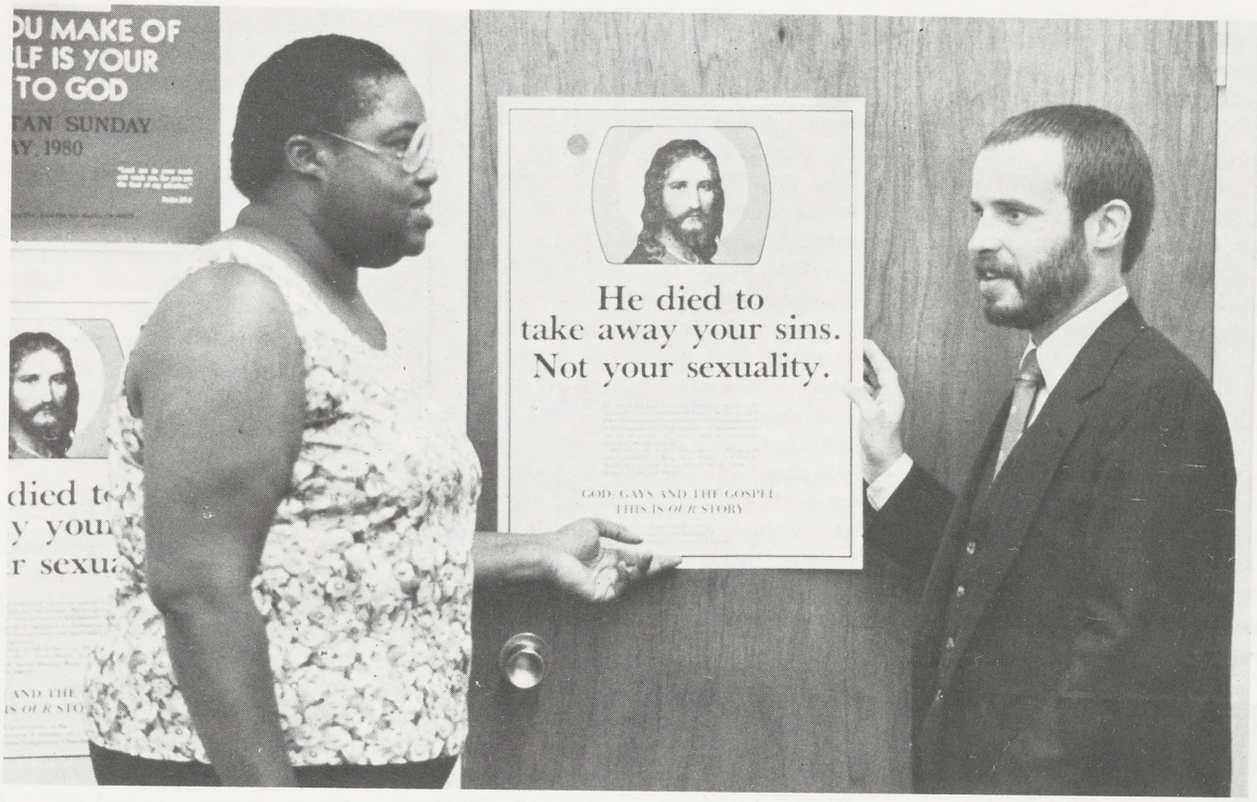
MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

IN UNITY

SEPTEMBER 1982



Greg Cutts, Co-producer of the television special, showing the promotional poster to Rev. Delores Berry, District Coordinator of the Mid-Atlantic District. The special is in the final stages of production, and contributions are coming in from all across the country, and from around the world, as word of the program is spread through this promotional campaign.

COUNCIL OF CHURCHES DELAYS ACTION

by R. Adam DeBaugh

The application of the UFMCC for membership in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has been referred to the NCC's Commission on Faith and Order for a year-long study of "the ecclesiological issues raised by this application."

The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and R. Adam DeBaugh, Co-directors of the UFMCC Department of Ecumenical Relations, represented the UFMCC at the Nashville meeting of the Governing Board of the NCCC in May, 1982. The two and a half day meeting was filled with irony, joy and sorrow, some victories and some defeats. On the whole, Elder Wilson and Mr. DeBaugh believe the experience was a very positive one for the UFMCC.

The NCCC Governing Board meeting began with a worship service during which members of the Governing Board together said the words, "We have gathered here because we share a vision sometimes dim - but yet a compelling vision - a vision of a whole church pointing out a pathway of justice and wholeness in a fragmented world."

The opening worship included readings from many Scriptures, including Amos 5, "Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;" and Governing Board members sang the hymn "Once to Every One and Nation," in which the words made a powerful witness to the issues the National Council was to confront concerning our membership application. "Once to every one and nation comes the moment to decide, in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side," they sang, "New occations teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth; they must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth."

The irony of words spoken read and

Editorial

With this issue we are ending our "forced vacation" of six months. The financial crisis which hit the Fellowship in March led to the decision to suspend publication of the magazine until after the Board of Elders meeting in Dallas in June. We took advantage of the lull by doing some much needed organizing and planning.

Dorian Ford, who had been involved in photography and layout, has taken on more of the office duties and will be serving as Copy Editor. You will enjoy seeing more articles and photos from Dorian in the future.

Even though we are again publishing, there is still a critical need for increased funds for the production and distribution of the magazine. We are appealing to you to help us increase both our subscriptions and advertising. A subscription to *In Unity* is not only a thoughtful gift, but every issue is a witness of the work of God in the UFMCC today. Every major library in the world should be receiving a copy of this magazine. Why not contribute a subscription to the library of your alma mater, or local university?

One of the remarkable trends in our community today is the development of a growing and successful entrepreneur class. It seems that every day a new Gay or Lesbian business is getting off the ground, and most of them are doing very well. Why not speak to your local businessperson about advertising in *In Unity*? It is probably the least expensive way to reach an international readership in our community today.

Next month we will bring you an exciting interview with Marsha J. Langford, President-elect of *Integrity*, the international organization of Gay and Lesbian Episcopalians and Anglicans. We are also planning a feature article on the National Evangelistic Team and Rev. Ron Anderson. You can also count on us to bring you the important news of the Fellowship, and discussion of the issues leading up to General Conference in Toronto.

We believe that you need *In Unity*. *In Unity* needs you. Send us your articles, your reactions, your news. We'll see that someone else gets to hear about it.

Steve Wilkins

IN UNITY

MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

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The appearance of a name in this magazine does not denote affectional or sexual preference.

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COUNCIL OF CHURCHES DELAYS ACTION ON UFMCC

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sung at the opening worship service of the Governing Board meeting was not lost on a number of Governing Board members who commented on it as the debate about UFMCC's application for membership deverloped over the next two and a half days. Clearly, the application and the presence of Elder Wilson and Mr. DeBaugh was both unsettling and reassuring to different members of the Governing Board.

A number of Governing Board members came out as Lesbian or Gay to Wison and DeBaugh, some very openly and joyfully, others much more subtly and fearfully. Still other homosexuals were openly hostile and worked against the UFMCC application, a familiar and tragic syndrome with some closetted homosexuals. Many non-Gay women and men ralied to our support, however, in gratifying and joyous common cause for justice.

The time at the Governing Board meeting was spent chiefly in small meetings with individuals and groups, handing out UFMCC By-laws and other descriptive literature, listening to fears and concerns, and talking with whomever would dialogue with us. The Consituent Membership Committee had submitted its report, recommending that the Governing Board "declare the UFMCC a church eligible to be considered for membership in the NCCUSA." This first step was not a vote on actual membership, it should be stressed, but merely the initial finding that the UFMCC meets the consitutional criteria for membership laid out in the NCCC by-laws. The Committee and many Governing Board members felt this vote should have been cut and dried: does the UFMCC meet the five criteria for membership or not? But Governing Board members include many who are so deeply troubled by the question of the UFMCC's position on homosexuality that no motion concerning the UFMCC would have escaped strong oppopsition and lively debate.

The Consituent Membership Committee's report was at first postponed when it became clear that most Governing Board members had not had any advance warning of this issue coming before them and none of the Governing Board members had received any information about the UFMCC. This happened as a result of the Membership Committee's determination to treat MCC's application like everyone else's and in most other cases of a Christian church applying to the NCCC, no advance information is necessary before the Governing Board considers the application for eligibility.

Elder Wilson and Mr. DeBaugh put together packets of UFMCC material to hand out to Governing Board members, including Fellowship By-laws, "The Universal Fellowship Today," and pamphlets on the Bible and Homosexuality. On the first day of the meeting, Wilson and DeBaugh also met with a number of groups of people, explaining what the UFMCC is.

When the Consituent Membership Committee report fianlly came up on the second day of the meeting, a subsitute motion was immediately made by Dr. Paul Crow of Indianapolis, ecumenical officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The motion was essentially to delay consideration of UFMCC's eligibility for membership in the NCCC until after a "study of the ecclesiological issues raised by this application" by the NCCC's Commission on Faith and Order. Forty-five minutes of debate followed which was largely restrained, but intense with a good deal of emotion on both sides eveident but not usually bursting forth. A number of amendments were made to the main subsitute motion to refer, but many people still spoke against delaying consideration of UFMCC's eligibility. Strong support for the UFMCC came from people in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern Presbyterians), United Presbyterian Church, United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, and from individuals in the Episcopal, Friends United Meeting, Disciples of Christ and Church of the Brethren. A number of Black people spoke eloquently about the issue of delaying decisions. The Rev. Percel Alston, a United Church of Christ delegate, said "I have the strange feeling that I've met this motion before. The issue then was not homosexuality but race. The motion would have the effect of amending the constitution. . . . For us to change the rules now seems to me to be unfair."

Barbara James, a Black Episcopal delegate who serves on the Consituent Membership Committee, said "Don't change the rules in order to discriminate. The issue today is whether this church is eligible for membership. Based on the rules we're currently working under, that cannot be denied."

Many women also spoke against Dr. Crow's motion to refer. The Rev. Mary Gene Boteler, a Presbyterian Church U.S. delegate, objected to comments that the UFMCC's theology differed with present member communions of the NCCC. "I sit down in the Council with people who do not recognize my ordination, my baptism; with people who will not sit at the Lord's table with me," she said. "But we still are in fellowship in the Council."

Other speakers, predominantly white men, supported Dr. Crow's motion to refer UFMCC's application for study. Andrew Vance of The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, said, "There is a question of whether the MCC does 'exist as a Christian body.' That is a theological issue." The Rev. William Cober of the American Baptist Churches raised the issue of some denominations pulling out the of National Council if the UFMCC is admitted. "Favorable action (on the UFMCC application) would endanger our relationship with the NCCC," he said.

Most of the Orthodox church delegates spoke in favor of delay and study, as did people from the smaller, Black churches like the A.M.E. Zion church, whose Bishop C.R. Coleman said he supported the Crow resolution because he wanted dialogue with MCC.

The subsitute motion was adopted by a vote of 88 to 77 with one abstention, a narrow vote which indicated surprising strength for supporters of the UFMCC. Then a number of additional amemdments were added to the motion, most of them helpful to the UFMCC. Lacy Camp of the United Methodist Church suggested an amendment to put a year-long time limit on the study, thus requiring the Faith and Order Commission to complete its study and report back to the Governing Board at its May, 1983, meeting in San Francisco (of all places!). Ms. Camp's amendment passed 91 to 60 with one abstention.

The Rev. Frederick Wilson of the United Presbyterian Church, added the word "confessing" to the phrase "confessing that we are unable at this time to take action."

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LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I want to thank you for the December Issue. It was an interesting publication and had sufficient variety of content to make it valuable reading. I am glad to know that there will be more emphasis in future on the happenings around the Fellowship. For those of us far away this is our only means of keeping up with the events in the life of other congregations.

This raises several queries which I would like answers to.

Firstly, what are the projected publication and copy dates for the rest of the year? One of the reasons why I have not submitted much to In Unity is that by the time it is printed (if ever) it is so out of date that it does not warrant reading. Unfortunately, this looks to the Australian Churches as though the material from this country does not warrant prompt publishing. I know that this is not the case - more often it is that the immediate publishing date has been missed. I think that if I could be supplied with a list of copy dates for the next 12 months I could help the people in the Melbourne congregation at least, to provide more copy and therefore help keep the wider Fellowship informed about our District.

Secondly, what are the requirements for copy material? Do photographs have to be black and white, glossy or matte, etc? Again, some of this basic information will certainly help us to provide usable copy and should help in overcoming your frustrations at not being able to use what is provided.

Good luck in the meantime - I hope this period as Editor is one that will help you to grow in awareness about the whole Fellowship and also one that will enable you to actively share in spreading the Gospel.

Yours in Christ's Service,

Rev. Jan Weymouth
Assistant Pastor
MCC Melbourne

Dear Rev. Weymouth,

Thank you for your letter. It's good to know that people are reading and enjoying In Unity.

You raise some very valid questions regarding submissions. I first want to say that we welcome all contributions, and will try to use all of them as space and interest permit. We welcome news and articles from Australia, and from all other parts of our Universal Fellowship.

As a newly-appointed Editor, I am still in the orientation stages, and I have not yet been able to implement a workable production scedule. However, a good rule of thumb for copy deadline is six-weeks to two months prior to the issue date. For example, material for the February issue should be received in our offices by December 1, or December 15. However, if copy comes in later, and it is newsworthy, we will often make room for it. Now that we are publishing monthly, I hope there will not be as much of a delay in printing news from Australia.

You mention photographs, and I want to emphasize how much we like to use good photographs. If you have a good picture, no matter what type it is, send it, and we will use it. This includes polaroids. However, if you are taking photos especially for our use, we prefer to have black and white glossy, with colour matte being equally easy to work with.

I am looking forward to articles from Australia, and from anywhere else that there are sisters and brothers doing God's work. Thank you for writing.

--Editor

NOTES

NEW BOOK DOCUMENTS HARASSMENT OF GAYS IN CUBA

Grey Fox Press has published Allen Young's "Gays Under The Cuban Revolution". The book documents the relentless persecution of homosexuals by the Castro regime in Cuba: widespread expulsion from schools and jobs, personal harassment, jailing, and physical violence. Anti-homosexual remarks by Prime Minister Fidel Castro and deceased guerrilla leader Che Guevara are reported, and information relating to the camps in which gays were imprisoned in the mid-1960s is brought forward, as well as a previously unpublished report by third world participants in the Venceremos Brigade - revealing their deep concern with Cuban racism - and a recent statement by Mexican homosexual activists denouncing Cuban anti-gay policies.

Young is a former New Left journalist who traveled to Cuba twice under the auspices of the Cuban government. He acknowledges having once been an enthusiastic supporter of the Castro regime, and the book inludes his personal account of his odyssey toward disillusionment. Young describes the cultural backdrop of pre-revolutionary Cuba and includes interviews with recent Cuban exiles he originally met in Cuba. Young's articles have appeared in *The New York Times, Mother Jones, Ramparts, Gay Sunshine, Gay Community News,* and *The Christian Science Monitor,* among others. He is coauthor - with Karla Jay - of three gay liberation anthologies and the recent survey *The Gay Report.*

"Allen Young uses his typewriter like an uppercut. Be alert when you read this man. "Gays Under the Cuban Revolution" will not please people who want their politics spoon-fed. This book should be force-fed to people who confuse government policy with government reality." Rita Mae Brown, author of "Rubyfruit Jungle".

Copies of the book may be obtained in paperback for $5.95 from: Subco, Box 10233, Eugene, OR 97440.

"Sobre El Asunto De Darse A Conocer Como Homosexual" first NGTF pulication available in Spanish

The National Gay Task Force has pulished a Spanish translation of its pamphlet "About Coming Out." The pamphlet, entitled "Sobre El Asunto De Darse A Conocer Como Homosexual", is oriented toward gay people going through the coming out process. It discusses why gay people often want to acknowledge their gay identities to others, suggestions for how to approach coming out to parents, relatives, friends, and work associates. In addition to the personal focus, the pamphlet outlines current educational and political rationales for coming out, and provides a bibliography on general gay issues.

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MCC FACES HARASSMENT IN COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

Columbia, Missouri is a small town of 60,000 in central Missouri, near the Missouri River. It is best known as a "College Town", since several campuses are located there, including the University of Missouri, Stephens College, Columbia College, and the Missouri School for the Deaf. Generally, College Towns in Middle America have a reputation of being "quiet" and "more liberal" than their neighbors. This has not been the experience of the congregation of MCC of the New Reformation, our local group in Columbia, or of their Pastor, Rev. Johannes W. (Jon) DiMaria-Kuiper.

In February, 1981, Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper arrived in Columbia to assume pastorate of the group, which was only a little over a year old at that time. With him was his spouse, Angelo, and their son, Alden.

The first few months were filled with activity and results. In an effort to put the church into the Community and make it more visible, a radio program was started, a church magazine was started, posters were placed throughout the city. Newspapers and television helped to spread the word. New counseling programs were started and a Gay AA group was formed. They were doing what the early Christian Church did, and what MCC has done since its beginning - telling as many people as they could, by any means they could, that salvation through Jesus Christ is for everyone.

Not all of the response was positive. For the first few months after the arrival of Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper, the group was holding services in the basement of his residence. The neighborhood was less than friendly.

Name-calling became frequent during the times of church services, and during the week. Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper's son, Alden, was harassed in school and on the school bus. The Principal of the school had to ride the bus to restore order. But Alden's only problem was not the children at school. Adults would say things to him like, "You don't have to live with those fags. All you have to do is contact the State Social Services and they will take care of you."

Then the harassment went beyond verbal antagonism. On two different occasions someone entered the building during the worship services and poured the coffee all over the floor, put eggs into the entry-way, and threw eggs at cars parked outside. Threatening phone calls were received. A board member's house was also broken into and vandalized.

Then on October 16, 1981 two neighbors paid a "friendly visit" to Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper. One was the father of a boy who had been denied bus privileges by the school for his treatment of Alden. He claimed to be Christian, and said he knew what the Bible said had to be done about people like those in MCC. In short, they were being threatened to leave the neighborhood. They also put pressure on the owners of the property. They said MCC was a bad influence on their children.

Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper called a news conference on November 23, 1981. He appealed to the religious people of the community of Columbia to support the right of MCC to exist, whether they agreed with them or not. In his statement to the press, he said, "The time has come for the entire community, and especially the religious community, to separate the issues. The approval of the homosexual lifestyle IS NOT a prerequisite to firm support and protection of basic civil rights for gays, lesbians, and their children. While we acknowledge that many cannot accept or affirm our lifestyle, we are convinced that the denial of human and civil rights to anyone (including lesbians and gays) is inconsistent with the beliefs and theology of the religious community and contrary to the basic philosophy of dignity and respect for all human beings."

The story was picked up by major newspapers as far away as Kansas City. Three "mainline" pastors responded to the call for support, and a large number of inquiries were received from all through the community.

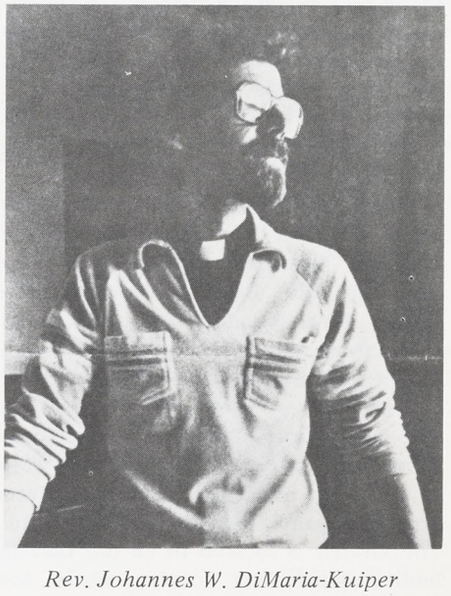
In the meantime, however, the owners of the property had indicated they would not renew the lease, which expired at the end of January, 1982. Things were looking more and more discourageing to the ever faithful group Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper likes to call "my motley crew".

Their prayers were abundantly answered in January, as they found not one piece of rental property, but two. On February 1, 1982, the Church moved into a new suite of offices which provide ample space for worship and counseling. They have been given a six month lease, as the owner was somewhat hesitant about the problems the group had been having.

Then, in mid-February, Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper moved into a new residence with an unlimited lease. The owner of the property knew exactly who was moving in, and told them they can stay as long as they like. Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper explained, "The house needs a lot of work, but we love it already. It feels like home."

As with any time of crisis, there were people who became frightened, discouraged, and left the group. But those remaining have been giving more, and working more. They especially were heartened by the letters and calls of encouragement received from throughout the Fellowship.

Rev. DiMaria-Kuiper says, "We have been strengthened as a group. *WE WILL NOT PUT CHRIST BACK INTO THE CLOSET!* We will not retreat! We are pressing forward to bring the gospel of Christ to our community."



Rev. Johannes W. DiMaria-Kuiper

STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY

MCC ATLANTA WEATHERS VANDALISM

By Rev. Jimmy Brock, Senior Pastor

Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta, Georgia, began 1982 with a three month celebration of its tenth Anniversary. The church was founded in January, 1972, and was chartered on Easter Sunday of that same year. During the celebration, former pastors John Gill, Howard Wells, and Pastor Emeritus John Hose were given special recognition, and plans called for a culmination of the festivities on Easter with a visit from Troy Perry. Suddenly, the celebration was interrupted by a series of break-ins that resulted in considerable damage to the building, and also considerable distress to the membership.

The first occurance of vandalism took place on March 15th, sometime during the night. At that time the vandals overturned all of the altar furniture, scattered music and hymnbooks all over the auditorium, broke a microphone, and a light on the piano, and generally made a wreck out of the auditorium. The most difficult thing to clean up was the residue of an emptied dust-type fire extinguisher. However, within hours of the discovery of the damage, more than two dozen faithful members assembled and cleaned up the mess. Entry to the building was make through a rear door which was immediately made more secure. Since nothing was taken, and no extensive permanent damage was done, the congregation was prone to mark the incident up to simple vandalism and dismiss it as such. The police did not come out to investigate and simply said that they did not investigate vandalism unless something was stolen.

One week later, March 22nd, once again a person or persons entered the building. This time the intruders came over the roof and entered through a second floor window into the sound room above the auditorium. The second visit was far more damaging than the first had been. The door to the church office was destroyed and the office itself was thoroughly ransacked. All the files were emptied in the floor, furniture was overturned, and a wall safe was destroyed. The church is located in an old theatre builing which was constructed in the early 1920's, and the safe had been there from the beginning. Ironically, the thieves did not get into the safe, but they succeeded in destroying all the mechanisms. Even more ironic is the fact that there was nothing of value in the safe. The only thing taken from the office was a new roll of stamps. In the auditorium, the second visit was much more disastrous. The auditorium walls are decorated with ten murals that are really gigantic in size. They were painted by a local artist, and are highly valued by the congregation. The murals were defaced with spray paint. Some paint was put on all ten of the paintings. On one wall was a giant swastika painted in red, and across the back wall was scrawled in spray paint, "fagots", (yes, misspelled) and another of the dreaded German Nazi symbols. After this second visit, a policeman was sent. He made a cursory investigation and took a few fingerprints, but little or nothing was done.

On the following Friday night, March 26th, the church was entered for a third time. Our Associate Pastor, Mike Piazza, left the office at about 5:00 P.M., and one of our members, Joseph Hickey, came in about 8:15 P.M. to find the auditorium ransacked again. This time, quarts of enamel paint were simply hurled at the murals. The spray paint had been mostly removed, but these concentrations of enamel would not come off. Where the red swastika had been removed, there now appeared the scripture reference, Romans 1:27. The most grotesque thing was a silver chalice full of red paint left on the altar. The police were immediately called again and reluctantly responded. As a matter of fact, the officer who came did not even want to go in the auditorium to investigate the damage, and even became personally abusive, at which time the pastor, Jimmy Brock, asked for his name and badge number and went to the phone to call Internal Affairs. In the past, the church had established good relationships with the upper level in the police department and with a local city council person. These contacts were made immediately, and at that point the attitude of the local police zone officers began to change drastically. Up to this point no effort had been made to contact local "straight" media, but it was decided that we needed to get all of the coverage that was possible. On that evening, all three local television stations sent camera crews, and Monica Kaufman, co-anchor person for Channel 2, came in person. On the evening news two of the stations gave coverage to what had happened only hours before. Since that time, the local media has expressed a continued interest in what is happening at MCC. As a result of the misfortune suffered by the church, we have received the most positive publicity that we have ever had. The church has been visited by the acting Chief of Police and by the Commissioner of Public Safety for the city of Atlanta.

On Monday, March 29th, the Associate Pastor received a phone call which stated that "what had happened to the building was only the beginning, and that he could find his fate in Leviticus 20:13". Of course, this is the passage that calls for the death of homosexuals. This was the most frightening of all the incidents and indicated that we might be up against a really determined effort to get us out of the community. However, all of the incidents have only served to increase our determination to stay in this location and to carry on our usual activities. The church has been located in this building for eight years and has never had this kind of problem before.

From the beginning of the Christian era, the church has been at its best during times of persecution. The events of the last few weeks have served to help make MCC Atlanta stronger and more united than it has been in a long time. Suddenly, we were faced with an outside enemy and we saw that it was imperative for us to stand together in the face of this adversary. We have also realized anew the necessity for dependence on God in our time of need. The reaction of the total Gay Community in Atlanta has been heartwarming. Already a number of benefits have been given on behalf of MCC, and we have been in touch with segments of the community with whom we have seldom had contact. In truth, things do work together for the good of those who love the Lord. Surely, those who invaded our religious sanctuary did not intend to do us good, but that has been the end result. Yes, we have suffered a loss of perhaps $30,000.00, but that cannot be compared with the good that has been done in the areas of unity and faith. We do believe that, "if God is for us, who can be against us". On a recent

STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY

Sunday afternoon, in the midst of a very liturgical service, the congregation joined in singing, "We Shall Overcome." We are deeply grateful to our fellow MCC congregations around the country and the world who have prayed for us and contacted us during our ordeal. Your support means more than you know. Thank you again, and our prayer is that God's richest blessing be upon each of You.

THEIR PAIN IS OUR PAIN

Reprinted below are letters that recently appeared in the editorial section of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Dear Editor:

The vandalism of the Metropolitan Community Church was cowardly and secretive. The desecration of the chalice may be seen as childish, but it is sacrilegious in comparing Jesus' blood with red paint. The vandals' apparent belief that they served God's purpose, implied by the Rom. 1:27 reference, is suggestive of paranoia or mental illness.

As a Christian and a United Methodist minister I am aware of the deep hurt of my Christian sisters and brothers at the M.C.C. I want my concern for them to be public. I hope Christians in Atlanta will demonstrate massive support for them.

Let us take warning. If a secretive few believe they can "judge" and "punish" in God's name, then no church or temple in Atlanta is safe from similar vandalism. The secretive few can vent their fear and rage upon any of us. They can justify their destructiveness by claiming they act for God. If some Christians can be attacked and harmed because they are gay, then other Christians can be attacked for being "black," harmed for being "too liberal," beaten for "dating the wrong kind," killed for "wanting freedom," maligned for being "too high church," and so on. The plight of Metropolitan Community Church members is the trial of all Christians. Their pain is OUR pain, and how they are treated is the way we may be treated.

Those of us who seek to have the mind of Christ know that "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." (I Jn 4:20 RSV) Love for all Christians, male and female, black and white, straight and gay, Catholic and Protestant, is the mark of a follower of Jesus Christ. Those who hate and destroy are still in darkness (cf. 1 Jn 2:9). We can deplore their actions and pray for their conversion.

Christians can console and strengthen one another. We seek to love the unlovely ones, for the vandals are created by God even as we are. My prayers are for patience and strength for the Rev. Jimmy Brock and his congregation and for God's mercy for the vandals.

May God give peace,

Quentin L. Hand, Ph.D
Associate Professor of Psychology
Candler School of Theology

Dear Editor:

I'm an evangelical Christian, a Southern Baptist who is active in the local church, and a self-affirming gay person who has been called with others into ministry with Atlanta's lesbian/gay communities.

As such I must speak out against the recent expansion of distorted rhetoric, politically inspired "hype" and actual violence perpetrated against Atlanta's second-largest minority. The recent profaning of the Metropolitan Community Church is a tragic testimony to our city's rising level of anti-gay hatred. I find it no small accident that this increased bigotry follows close on the heels of (the Rev.) Jerry Falwell's lunatic ravings, (the Rev.) Jimmy Allen's anti-gay slurs and (Dr.) Charles Stanley's empire building.

Atlantans must honor the constitutional rights of its gay citizens, and all thinking people of faith must ask themselves if myth-mongering and desecrating churches bears any resemblance to one who said "Love your neighbor as yourself."

J. David Chewning, Chairman
Evangelical Outreach Ministries

NGTF PUBLISHES "WHO'S BEHIND THE GAY RIGHTS MOVEMENT?"

The National Gay Task Force has published a new booklet which documents wide-spread non-gay support for gay civil rights. "Who's Behind the Gay Rights Movement? A Gay Civil Rights Packet" offers a remarkable array of evidence at the depth of support gay people enjoy in the non-gay community. Included are resolutions from professional and scientific organizations, non-discrimination statements from major corporations, statements from religious leaders, public opinion polls, and quotes from other major shapers of public opinion in America.

Statements are included from such diverse sources as the Lutheran Church in America, the Jos. Schlitz Brewing Co., the American Association for the Advancement of Science, *Newsday*, the National YWCA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and more than 200 others. The booklet will be a valuable tool for activists to use in their work with the media, in lobbying legislators, in dealing with employers, and in building strength within the gay and non-gay community.

Lucia Valeska, Executive Director of NGTF, commented, "As we struggle to achieve our rights, it often seems that our progress is terribly slow, particularly in light of how long and hard so many of us have worked. But we must realize that the gay movement has generated significant non-gay support and that we are winning in our effort to achieve major changes in public attitudes. This booklet demonstrates that we are not a "lunatic fringe" in American society, but that we - and our friends - 'are everywhere' ".

This booklet is one in a series of educational publications distributed by the National Gay Task Force and funded in part by the NGTF Fund for Human Dignity. Copies are available for $3.00 (discounts available for quantity orders) from NGTF, 80 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011.

IN MEMORIAM
REV. PAUL VAN HECKE

Paul Van Hecke

Rev. Paul Van Hecke,
Ordained by Metropolitan Community Churches on September 3, 1972.
Born August 15, 1898.
Deceased, the morning of the Feast of the Resurrection, April 11, 1982, Los Angeles, California.
Survived by his son, B.C. Van Hecke, loving family, and a multitude of friends.

I first saw Paul at General Conference in 1970 . . . our first. We were not everywhere welcome and so we had held our meeting in three different locations and the Sunday morning service was in the Auditorium of the old Embassy. And one looks back and remembers a stately old gentleman with a corona of fine white hair standing on that platform, already in his 60s, planning to leave for Dallas, Texas . . . a city that would not be unfailingly polite to him, and telling us that he was looking forward so very much to his first missionary work on our behalf, that we had never made him feel old, or different, or separate, but that he loved us all so much that he missed us already and he hadn't even left yet.

We live in a ageist society and we have not, you and I, cured ourselves of that, and so maybe that was all that kept Dallas from being the great success story of his life, but in any event, some time later he returned to the Los Angeles area. I know that I never heard him say an unkind word about that first assignment.

There was this about Paul, he was the most open person you would ever meet. If you did not really want the information you probably should not ask the question. In Phoenix and in Providence he taught people who mattered to me, and taught me, what it really means to be transparently open, to *let it all hang out.*

Paul came to visit us once in Phoenix. He preached Sunday morning and sang "His Eye Is On the Sparrow". And then Sunday evening we started service about 7:30 and what with talking and preaching and praying we finally started Communion about 10:00 o'clock. You know what? None of us were bored and we just loved it. He taught us and prayed with us and loved us.

So we invited him back. He was due in Friday night and didn't show. We were distressed. We checked the first buses Saturday morning. He wasn't on them. We were distressed and a little angry. We hadn't heard from him. And then, late Saturday morning he showed up. No explanation. We were more than a little angry, and so very glad to see him. He shared with us in what he himself might have called an "unusual and beautiful way". And then Sunday morning he stepped into the pulpit and he began to preach and teach . . . and he got excited. And then he stopped. And he told us that his eyes had been operated on and he had been told that he was not allowed to get excited. And his son had asked him not to take the Greyhound from L.A. to Phoenix, not to risk getting excited . . . not to go.

And Paul explained that his son had taken him down to Long Beach to an Antique show early Friday, but he had had this strong sense that he should be going to Phoenix. And he said, "I felt called to do that." So he took the bus back to Los Angeles, and he went to his house to get some clothing, and he had had to sit on his front steps awhile to get up strength to continue, "But, I knew I was called to go to Phoenix." And somewhere along the way he had had to stand in the fog waiting for a bus, but that was alright, "Because, I knew I was supposed to go to Phoenix." And then he got to the Hollywood Greyhound Station, but he had missed a bus and had to wait into the night for the next one, and then hours on the bus, "But I am called to Phoenix." And then he arrived, and Sunday morning, and in preaching he "got excited" and everything seemed still to be alright, and "Glory to God! I can still preach!" We had asked him to come minister to us and God is so good, we had the opportunity to minister to him. We gave him a large print Bible that time so that he could read scripture that he loved so much.

Paul came to us again in Phoenix and could no longer even read large print. We arranged for him to be fitted with special glasses. Glasses for this beautiful man who *would not* be blind. A young man had attached himself to Paul for the weekend. That was an inspiration for us all. We came into the social hall, Paul with his special glasses. The young man, from the other side of the room said, "Hello! Paul." Paul turned, took one look and said, "Glory! Is that what you look like?" The most open man we ever met.

In 1975 Ken and Earl and a couple of us talked about Paul. About the fact that many people around the country did not know him, and that Paul might not know that his ministry was very important to this Fellowship and its members. This was at the Dallas General Conference. So one of us placed a single one dollar bill on the table and suggested that others be asked to do the same so that we might ask this 70 year old man to travel around the country on a Greyhound bus. By the end of conference we had enough to pay for two-three month bus passes. And Paul began to travel the country.

I remember going to Boston the first time he came to New England. There weren't many at the service and almost half of them had come up from Providence. And I remember his standing at the Altar Rail of Old West Church and extending a call to come to the Altar. He looked out over the sparce group with his near sightless eyes, "Come." Nothing, not a stir. "Glory to God, I know you are from Boston, but come anyway!" And people, slowly got out of their seats and came forward for a touch, a healing word, a word of wisdom, a word of prayer.

Paul worked especially well among people who knew and trusted each other. Sometimes he was so open that it was hard to integrate new people into that. We have learned so well how to hide our beautiful selves that the willingness to answer *anything* is sometimes frightening.

But Paul *did* have those months around the country. He had that time with many of us. This will never be trivial for those who experienced it. Paul is gone

REV. PAUL VAN HECKE

now, so we have the opportunity to build on what he did and who he was, or we can just trivialize all that. We can get all sentimental, all soupy, and let that be the message. Or we can resolve to continue to build openness and honesty in real relational life-styles. We can work to create a Gay and Lesbian culture in which there is nothing that cannot be asked and nothing that cannot be answered, as was so with Paul Van Hecke, a priest forever.

- Rev. Joseph H. Gilbert, Pastor of King of Peace Metropolitan Community Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Continued from Page 4

Lucia Valeska, Executive Director of NGTF, said, "This publication begins to address a serious need in the gay and lesbian community - the need for educational material in languages other than English. We intend to continue the translation of NGTF materials into other languages to meet this need."

The writing and printing of the English and Spanish editions of the pamphlet was made possible by a grant by the NGTF Fund for Human Dignity, Inc. Copies are available for $1.00 from NGTF, Suite 1601, 80 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

MCC - SF TAKES ANTI-NUCLEAR STAND

Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco in its congregational business meeting on May 25, 1982, voted as official policy a statement calling for a worldwide nuclear freeze in the conviction that "the use of nuclear weapons . . . is contrary to the will of God." The statement, originally published by faculty and students of Harvard Divinity School, passed by an overwhelming majority. Members of the church meet regularly as a world peace prayer/action group and the church supports such activities as Ground Zero Week, the Peace Pentecost observance and a 24-hour world peace prayer vigil to be conducted at 1st Unitarian Church here later in the summer. The congregation voted that the Northwest District be urged to adopt this statement as official district policy. The pastor, Michael England, told the congregation that this action was especially important as a new step of action for human rights and justice beyond the specific scope of lesbian/gay issues. The text of the statement reads: "We, the members of Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco, California, wish to state publicly our conviction that the use of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances, is contrary to the will of God. While there may have been just wars in the past, the inability to place traditional constraints on nuclear war now makes any moral justification impossible.

"We urge our sisters and brothers in the faith communities of all nations to join us in condemning nuclear war in any form, and in calling for an immediate, world-wide freeze on the production of nuclear weapons, a staged reduction of present nuclear arsenals, and the eventual abolition of all nuclear arms.

"In the name of God, let us speak out now, lest our silence once again make us accomplices to holocaust, this one threatening the very existence of humankind."

LOBBY AGAIN ASKS HELP IN DOCUMENTING OF DISCRIMINATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- "Although it's clear that gay men and lesbians often face employment discrimination, we must demonstrate to Members of Congress specific instances of its occurrence." So said Steve Endean, Executive Director of the Gay Rights National Lobby, announcing GRNL's "Documentation of Discrimination" Project.

"Without a clearly demonstrated 'compelling need,' advancement of fair employment and fair housing legislation will be far more difficult."

Consequently, the Lobby is again issuing a nationwide call for such documentation, seeking individual cases of discrimination in the realm of employment (hiring, promotion, or firing), housing and public accomodations or services.

Dignity, Inc., the national gay Catholic group; Metropolitan Community Churches; and many other local organizations have agreed to assist in this important project.

The final result of this project is expected to be a booklet looking at the basic unfairness of such arbitrary discrimination. The booklet will also be useful for local and state groups in their quest for non-discrimination legislation.

Persons who have faced such discrimination in employment, housing, public accomodations or public services, or those who know of such cases, should send personal accounts of this discrimination. GRNL will honor confidentiality. GRNL is also seeking any news articles, clippings, or other materials which will assist in documenting discrimination. Write to Gay Rights National Lobby, "Documentation of Discrimination" Project, P.O. Box 1892, Washington, D.C. 20013.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry and Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson at a Birthday party given for them by the UFMCC Office Staff. Rev. Elder Perry's birthday was July 27. Rev. Elder Wilson's was July 13.

STARTING AT THE TOP

by Steve Warren

Is UFMCC taking a risk by giving too much power and responsibility to laypersons?

That would be a good subject for another article to consider. This one is about how two laypeople in the Northwest District commuted 600 miles roundtrip on weekends for a year to establish a study group.

For one of the pair, Michael Mank, it was the final "labor of Hercules" before being elected to the Board of Elders. For the other, this writer, it was a chance to start at the top in the ministry - a total immersion, to mix metaphors.

My involvement began two years ago at a district retreat when one night at a worship service we sang "Spirit of the Living God," and out of some 60 voices God heard mine. Within a week I was melted, molded, shaped and on my way to being used.

Unbeknownst to me, Michael had obtained permission that week from our district coordinator, Rev. A. Austin Amerine, to go ahead with a pilot project of using a lay team to start a new work. Michael's idea was to have three members - at least one of them a woman - on the team; but as God and/or luck would have it, I turned out to be the only volunteer. My participation came about through a chance bit of small talk so trivial as to reemphasize that nothing and no one is too insignificant to be used to God's purpose.

At that point I had never preached a sermon; I got nervous speaking in front of groups, had begged out of distributing communion in my own church and hadn't sung a solo in public in 20 years. Little did I know those were just the qualifications God had in mind!

In my favor were a gift for assembling words in a way that communicates and sometimes entertains; and 8½ years of MCC membership, in which time I'd been exposed to the fellowship's finest preachers and absorbed a lot of information (mostly subconsciously) that I could pass on to others. There was also, I think, a latent desire to serve God - I was ready to "come out."

The location of our group evolved as naturally as my involvement. It was Humboldt County, California, the site of our district retreat. Locals who "discovered" MCC during our week there asked us to start a permanent work in their area, and Michael was familiar with the region from his efforts with the "No on 6" campaign to defeat the notorious "Briggs Amendment."

Michael did all the groundwork including calling an organizational meeting which 12 people (a magic number for our fellowship) turned out for. I took no active part until the last weekend of September, when the church-to-be hosted a well-attended dance the night before the first service.

After a brief nomadic period the congregation found a regular meeting place in a private school (with a piano) by the third Sunday. There was some initial fluctuation but the size of the group stabilized with attendance averaging in the low 20's through the winter and spring.

Several clergy and members of MCC San Francisco and other Bay Area churches went up as guests, some more than once during the year. We believe this gave the remote congregation some sense of being connected to a larger whole, but we don't know how clear a conception of that whole our efforts gave them.

On November 6, 1980, the Board of Home Missions of the Northwest District voted to accept MCC Humboldt as a study group. That night northern California was rocked by the year's biggest earthquake, its epicenter 20 miles off the coast of Humboldt County. Thank God the "Moral Majority" wasn't able to connect the two events!

MCC Humboldt faced many of the same difficulties as most beginning churches in our fellowship: burnout and turnover of membership; uninformed badmouthing in the community of religion in general and MCC in particular; and people trying to use the church to carry out their own (often well meaning) private agendas.

Money was no problem. (What's that? Must be a typo!) Rent was cheap ($50/month), the district paid gas expenses for the worship coordinators and members of the congregation put us up in their homes. When offerings lagged, it was easy enough to throw a dance and raise a small fortune.

The mix of men and women was better than in most of our churches, remaining fairly equal most of the year. Michael and I agonized for weeks about whether to dictate a 5 or 7 member board of directors. We finally agreed to leave it to God and the congregation. They voted unanimously (God perhaps abstaining) to have six members, "three men and three women." Before we could explain that the democratic process doesn't always allow for gender parity they had nominated three men and three women and elected them unanimously.

This "laid back" attitude that characterized our congregation was a constant source of amazement and amusement to us high powered city dudes. From the start we were extremely careful to use inclusive language at all times, sometimes explaining what we were doing and why, and other times hoping our example would speak for itself. We assembled a hymnal of more than 70 inclusivized entries. But then left to pray or read Scripture by themselves, our "babies" never omitted a "He," "Him" or "Father."

The fact that neither worship coordinator lived in the area kept us from doing much publicity or assisting in mid-week activities. Some church members took initiative in these areas, but many were concerned with keeping a low profile.

The two main cities of Humboldt County, Eureka and Arcata, are less than ten miles apart. Even in such a small community the congregation managed to split at times into a Eureka faction and an Arcata faction. Services were held in Arcata, the home of Humboldt State University.

We knew that summer, when the university shut down, would be our most difficult season; but it was worse than we aniticipated. Not many of our members attended or were employed by the university; but we hadn't counted on the severity of economic conditions in the area, which led about a fourth of the congregation to move away at the beginning of the summer.

Under the circumstances Michael and I may have been wrong to start our "weaning" process at that time. We agreed to continue our ministry though the end of September, the church's first anniversary. In case the district didn't have a worship coordinator to send in after us (as proved to be the case), we

CONDUCTING WORSHIP SERVICES ONESELF TAKES SOME OF THE "MYSTERY" OUT OF THEM.

prepared the congregation to minister to each other by leaving them on their own every other Sunday through the summer.

The effect was somewhat akin to sending in a subsitute teacher. When one or both of us was there, attendance was in the 10-12 range; when we weren't it wasn't half that. Whatever slight gratification this gave our egos was erased by worry about that would happen when we stopped going up altogether.

Attendance began rebuilding in September, with some new people looking like potential leaders. Without a worship coordinator to nurture them and to steer the group, however, it was questionable whether MCC Humboldt could sustain its revived momentum for very long.

As it turned out a faithful few kept the dream alive until the district held another retreat there in July of this year. At that time a student clergyperson was found who would visit Humboldt every two weeks to conduct worship services, and two members of MCC-Humboldt made arrangements to visit Portland to be trained as deacons.

Lay teams can be useful to districts in beginning new works and testing the potential of an area to sustain a church; but eventually the clergypower will have to be available to follow through, if their efforts are not to be in vain.

That's one recommendation we took away from the experience. Another is that there should be three team members so each can have every third weekend off, leaving two to conduct the service. This should reduce burnout and the sense of isolation from one's home church while starting a new one. Where shorter distances are involved this may be less essential, but we still think it's a good idea. We also believe at least one team member whould bive in the area of the study group to be a full time presence in the community.

Was the Humboldt experiment a waste of time? I don't think so. In the course of the year the word of God was preached to over 300 different people, many of whom wouldn't have gone into another church to hear it. We didn't win every soul we went after, but how much effort is even one soul worth?

Michael has found use as an elder for the preaching skills he refined at Humboldt, and our hymnal has been adopted by the Excel program in the Northwest District. Having lost my shyness in front of congregations I'm helping out where I can in my home church and doing my "sermonizing" in articles for various church newsletters.

Conducting worship services oneself takes some of the "mystery" out of them. Once you've done it you never feel quite the same when you sit in the congregation. I assume that seminary prepares the clergy for this phenomenon, but I doubt whether all laypersons are equipped to handle it. Any negative impact I suffered on that score was more than overcome by the deepening of my faith from the many times during services when my own powers failed me and I felt the Holy Spirit come in and take over.

I was not surprised, therefore, when the borrowed time my old car had been running on ran out on the way back from the last trip it had to make to Humboldt. That '74 Pinto lasted as long as it was needed, then "gave up the "ghost."

In many ways my year with MCC Humboldt seems like a dream now that I've fallen back into my old patterns. I don't have any more time on my hands than when I was taking a day and a half out each week for missionary work, though maybe I'm not using my time as well.

Would I do it again? Considering the matter rationally at this time I would have to say no, but I would have said it more emphatically a week before I accepted the call to Humboldt. If there's one thing I learned from the whole experience, it's never to say never.

Steve Warren, a charter member of MCC Atlanta, is now on the Board of Directors of MCC San Francisco.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe:

1. In one triune God, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, of one substance and of three persons: God - our Parent-Creator; Jesus Christ the only begotten son of God, God in flesh, human; and the Holy Spirit - God as our Sustainer.

2. That the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, showing forth God to every person through the law and the prophets, and finally, completely and ultimately on earth in the being of Jesus Christ.

3. That Jesus . . . the Christ . . . historically recorded as living some 2,000 years before this writing, is God incarnate, of human birth, fully God and fully human, and that by being one with God, Jesus has demonstrated once and forever that all people are likewise Children of God, being spiritually made in God's image.

4. That the Holy Spirit is God making known God's love and interest to all people. The Holy Spirit is God, available to and working through all who are willing to place their welfare in God's keeping.

5. Every person is justified by Grace to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

6. We are saved from loneliness, despair and degradation through God's gift of grace, as was declared by our Saviour. Such grace is not earned, but is a pure gift from a God of pure love. We further commend the community of the faithful to a life of prayer; to seek genuine forgiveness for unkind, thoughtless and unloving acts; and to a committed life of Christian service.

7. The Church serves to bring all people to God through Christ. To this end, it shall arrange for regular services of worship, prayer, interpretation of the Scriptures, and edification through the teaching and preaching of the Word.

Continued from Page 3

After all the amendments the new main motion, Dr. Crow's substitute, was passed by a clear majority of the voice vote.

The action passed by the Governing Board of the NCCC on the membership application of the UFMCC follows:

"Recognizing that the Constituent Membership Committee has recommended that the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches meets the Constitutional requirements for eligibility, and

"Recognizing that the application of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches raises fundamental issues about the nature of the Church and human sexuality, and confessing that we are unable at this time to take action without study and reflection, the Governing Board of the NCCC in the U.S.A.:

"1) Refers this matter to the Commission on Faith and Order for a study of the ecclesiological issues raised by this application, including the nature of the ecumenical fellowship in the NCCC. The Commission will involve the member churches in appropriate ways and engage in dialogue with the Metropolitan Community Church.

"2) On behalf of the Governing Board asks the Executive Committee to assist in this study and to report to the Governing Board in November 1982 on the status of the study.

"3) Postpones action on the recommendation of the Consituent Membership Committee until the report of the Faith and Order Commission has been received.

"4) Declares its intention that this study be understood as an axpression of pastoral concern for all of us involved in May 1983."

Elder Wilson and Mr. DeBaugh have already begun communication with the staff of the Commission on Faith and Order and the study required by the resolution will continue with substantial UFMCC participation.

Commenting on the decision reached in Nashville, DeBaugh admitted to being hurt and angry at first. "We all get upset at delay in issues of justice and I was let down after the vote. But on reflection it is clear that one of the primary reasons for our application to the National Council of Churches is to engage its member churches in dialogue. So even before we are admitted, that dialogue is begun. In a way, this vote was a triumph for that goal of discussion with other church bodies." DeBaugh said.

There is one final irony of the National Council of Churches' struggle over the question of the admittance to their number of the UFMCC. At the Nashville Governing Board meeting NCCC staff unveiled a new campaign for the ecumenical community represented by the National Council. The campaign attempts to demonstrate the inclusiveness of the ecumenical community and features, in posters and buttons, the word "ec menical" with the third letter blank. Below is the question, "Are U Missing?"

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, and in a way Gay and Lesbian people in the mainline churches as well, were forced to respond, "Yes, so far we are missing from fellowship in the ecumenical community."

NEXT MONTH

Marsha J. Langford, new President of Integrity, International, shares news of the latest progress in the Epicopal and Anglican church, as well as her insights into the struggles of women within "male-heavy" religious organizations.

Reflections and analysis of the planning sessions in Dallas, Texas, June, 1982.

A look at the National Evangelistic Team and its dynamic founder, the Rev. Ron Anderson.

PLUS - the latest news from UFMCC around the world.

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